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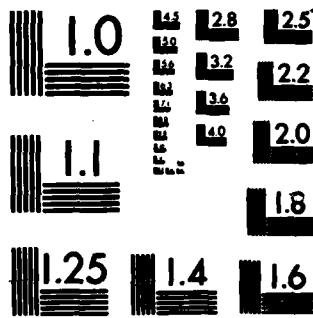
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A PROFILE OF THE COMMUNICATION
TASKS OF AIR FORCE OFFICERS

TECHNICAL REPORT

Dr. Charles R. Fenno

AU-AFIT-LS-1-85

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A

Approved for public release
Distribution Unlimited

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR UNIVERSITY

AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio

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accordance with AFR 190-1.

John F. Kelly
John F. Kelly, Major
Director AFIT/PA

ABSTRACT

In response to a questionnaire sent to 1,008 Air Force officers, 801 respondents provided information about the writing and briefing requirements of their current jobs. In addition, more than 400 of the officers commented on the importance of communication skills and recommended objectives for courses designed to help leaders and managers to communicate effectively.

A very large majority (93.1%) of the respondents consider writing to be either "very" or "critically" important on the job; 63.6% put briefing in the same categories. The officers consider organizing material to be of greatest importance in both writing and briefing, followed by (in writing) drafting and editing and analysis of audience and purpose. In briefings, delivering material and handling questions and discussions are also very important to the respondents.

According to the officers, the primary objective of a professional communication course is to produce a clear and direct communication style in documents and briefings. The respondents agree that competence in basic grammar and mechanics is essential, but they do not limit their recommendations to remedial topics. They also recommend that courses develop adaptability to different communication situations, and the ability to organize and deliver information cogently on short notice.

The majority believe that briefing (80.4%) and writing (86.4%) instruction should be available to graduate students.

INTRODUCTION

As public and private organizations have expanded during the last several decades, managers have become increasingly aware of the importance of effective communication, both within organizations and between them and the people who use their products and services. This awareness has stimulated research by both industry and academic institutions into communication-related areas as diverse as management information systems, computer networks, communication theory and practice, and quality circle technology.

The United States Air Force, one of the nation's large public organizations, recognizes the importance of efficient communication as it carries out its mission. Its graduate school, the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), provides education in all of the areas mentioned above, as well as many other subjects that are required for the effective leadership of large organizations.

Curriculum planners at AFIT continually monitor national and Air Force requirements in their areas of specialization to ensure that the Institute's programs are not only academically strong but also responsive to changing needs and new knowledge. The study reported here is the result of one investigation in the area of spoken and written communication. Based on a survey of more than one thousand Air Force officers, it assesses the communication demands within a large organization. In addition, it reports the officers' views about the importance of communication skills for managers in leadership roles and about the best content for communication courses.

Although the data reported here were collected from Air Force officers, the results of the study should be of interest to professionals of other types--to educators throughout the Department of Defense, to educators in civilian institutions whose students will work in large organizations, and to managers of large organizations, who may compare their own communication tasks with those of the respondents.

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PROCEDURE

A survey packet was mailed to all (1,008) active duty Air Force officers who had completed AFIT's graduate programs in logistics and engineering management and who were currently stationed in the continental United States. This population was selected because AFIT graduates work in representative management jobs within the Air Force.

Survey Packet

The survey packet mailed to each participant contained a letter of transmittal, a privacy statement in accordance with Air Force policy, the questionnaire, and a pre-addressed return envelope. The letter of transmittal, privacy statement, and questionnaire are shown on pages 5-10.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire contained a brief demographic section about the officers, eight questions about oral communication, and six questions about written communication. Both the cover letter and the questionnaire invited the respondents to remain anonymous, and the questionnaire provided space for any open-ended comments that respondents wanted to make. All structured questions required only a check mark or single-word response.

Six of the eight speech questions and five of the six writing questions asked for information about the respondent's current job. Three other questions surveyed opinions about the roles and content of speech and writing courses in the AFIT curriculum.

The respondents were invited to grant permission to quote their open-ended questions by signing a space at the end of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Structured responses on completed questionnaires were coded for computer data files and analyzed by means of SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (1).

(1). Norman H. Nye et al., SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (AFIT)
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, OH 45433

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: LSH (Dr. Fenno, AV 785-6761)

SUBJECT: Communication Needs of Your Job

TO: AFIT Graduates

1. One of our important jobs at AFIT is to stay informed about the work our graduates are doing so we can keep the Institute's courses in line with changing Air Force needs. We are writing to ask your help in this essential activity.
2. Recently, several graduates indicated that speaking and writing skills are essential in their jobs, and they recommended additional training in these areas. Their comments are reported in the AOG Quarterly, Fall, 1982. We want to meet this need.
3. You can give us valuable guidance by answering the brief questionnaire attached to this letter. Your answers will tell us how much communication is required in your current job and how AFIT training can best match those requirements. Although the questionnaire is short (5-10 minutes to complete), it will show us what emphases are needed.
4. Of course, all responses will be treated as confidential, and no individuals or organizations will be identified in use of this material unless you give us specific written permission to quote.
5. Please return your responses in the enclosed, pre-addressed envelope within 15 days of receipt. Thank you for your help.

Charles R. Fenno

CHARLES R. FENNO
Professor of Technical Communication

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Survey Packet (AUSCN 83-08)

1st Ind

1. I hope you will take the time to complete the attached questionnaire and return it in the pre-addressed envelope. You have unique information that will help our course directors plan the training of other Air Force officers.
2. Your participation is completely voluntary, but we would certainly appreciate your help.

Larry L. Smith

LARRY L. SMITH, Colonel, USAF
Dean
School of Systems and Logistics

PRIVACY STATEMENT

In accordance with paragraph 8, AFR 12-35, the following information is provided as required by the Privacy Act of 1974:

a. Authority:

- (1) 5 U.S.C. 301, Departmental Regulations, and/or
- (2) 10 U.S.C. 8012, Secretary of the Air Force, Powers, Duties, Delegation by Compensation, and/or
- (3) EO 9397, 22 Nov 43, Numbering System for Federal Accounts Relating to Individual Persons, and/or
- (4) DOD Instruction 1100.13, 17 Apr 68, Surveys of Department of Defense Personnel, and/or
- (5) AFR 30-23, 22 Sept 76, Air Force Personnel Survey Program.

b. Principal purposes. The survey is being conducted to collect information to be used in research aimed at illuminating and providing inputs to the solution of problems of interest to the Air Force and/or DOD.

c. Routine Uses. The survey data will be converted to information for use in research of education related problems. Results of the research, based on the data provided, will be used by curriculum planners and may also be included in published articles, reports, or texts. Distribution of the results of the research, based on the survey data, whether in written form or presented orally, will be unlimited.

d. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary.

e. No adverse action of any kind may be taken against any individual who elects not to participate in any or all of this survey.

NAME (Optional): _____

RANK (Circle one): Lt Capt Maj Lt Col Col Other _____

YEARS IN SERVICE: _____

YEAR OF AFIT GRADUATION: _____

LEVEL OF COMMAND OF CURRENT ASSIGNMENT (Circle one):

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| a. Squadron or below | f. Major Command |
| b. Group | g. HQ Air Force |
| c. Wing | h. AFSC Product Division (ESD, ASD, etc.) |
| e. Numbered Air Force | i. Other (Please specify) |

CURRENT DUTY AIR FORCE SPECIALTY CODE (AFSC): _____

ABOUT ORAL COMMUNICATION

1. About what percentage of your workweek is spent preparing briefings?
(Check one)

___ 1 - 5%	___ 21 - 25%	___ 41 - 45%	___ 61 - 65%	___ 81 - 85%
___ 6 - 10%	___ 26 - 30%	___ 46 - 50%	___ 66 - 70%	___ 86 - 90%
___ 11 - 15%	___ 31 - 35%	___ 51 - 55%	___ 71 - 75%	___ 91 - 95%
___ 16 - 20%	___ 36 - 40%	___ 56 - 60%	___ 76 - 80%	___ 96 - 100%

2. About what percentage of your workweek is spent delivering briefings?
(Check one)

___ 1 - 5%	___ 21 - 25%	___ 41 - 45%	___ 61 - 65%	___ 81 - 85%
___ 6 - 10%	___ 26 - 30%	___ 46 - 50%	___ 66 - 70%	___ 86 - 90%
___ 11 - 15%	___ 31 - 35%	___ 51 - 55%	___ 71 - 75%	___ 91 - 95%
___ 16 - 20%	___ 36 - 40%	___ 56 - 60%	___ 76 - 80%	___ 96 - 100%

3. About what percentage of your workweek is spent attending briefings?
(Check one)

___ 1 - 5%	___ 21 - 25%	___ 41 - 45%	___ 61 - 65%	___ 81 - 85%
___ 6 - 10%	___ 26 - 30%	___ 46 - 50%	___ 66 - 70%	___ 86 - 90%
___ 11 - 15%	___ 31 - 35%	___ 51 - 55%	___ 71 - 75%	___ 91 - 95%
___ 16 - 20%	___ 36 - 40%	___ 56 - 60%	___ 76 - 80%	___ 96 - 100%

4. Average number of people at briefings you deliver? _____

5. How important is briefing-related activity in your current position?
(Check one)

___ Minimal importance
___ Some importance
___ Very important
___ Critical importance

6. Did you take a speech or briefing course at AFIT? (Check one) ☐ Yes
☐ No
7. Should a separate briefing course be included in the AFIT curricula? (Check one)
- ☐ No
☐ Yes, as an elective
☐ Yes, as a requirement
8. Based on the needs of your current job, what topics should be emphasized in an AFIT briefing course?

<u>Strong</u> <u>Emphasis</u>	<u>Light</u> <u>Emphasis</u>	<u>No</u> <u>Emphasis</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Locating material
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organizing material
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delivering material
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Producing visual aids
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Analyzing audiences
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Handling questions and discussions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

ABOUT WRITING

1. About what percentage of your workweek is spent writing? (Check one)
- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 5% | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 - 25% | <input type="checkbox"/> 41 - 45% | <input type="checkbox"/> 61 - 65% | <input type="checkbox"/> 81 - 85% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 - 10% | <input type="checkbox"/> 26 - 30% | <input type="checkbox"/> 46 - 50% | <input type="checkbox"/> 66 - 70% | <input type="checkbox"/> 86 - 90% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 - 15% | <input type="checkbox"/> 31 - 35% | <input type="checkbox"/> 51 - 55% | <input type="checkbox"/> 71 - 75% | <input type="checkbox"/> 91 - 95% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 - 20% | <input type="checkbox"/> 36 - 40% | <input type="checkbox"/> 56 - 60% | <input type="checkbox"/> 76 - 80% | <input type="checkbox"/> 96 - 100% |
2. About what percentage of your workweek is spent dealing with writing done by others? (Check one)
- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 5% | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 - 25% | <input type="checkbox"/> 41 - 45% | <input type="checkbox"/> 61 - 65% | <input type="checkbox"/> 81 - 85% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 - 10% | <input type="checkbox"/> 26 - 30% | <input type="checkbox"/> 46 - 50% | <input type="checkbox"/> 66 - 70% | <input type="checkbox"/> 86 - 90% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 - 15% | <input type="checkbox"/> 31 - 35% | <input type="checkbox"/> 51 - 55% | <input type="checkbox"/> 71 - 75% | <input type="checkbox"/> 91 - 95% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 - 20% | <input type="checkbox"/> 36 - 40% | <input type="checkbox"/> 56 - 60% | <input type="checkbox"/> 76 - 80% | <input type="checkbox"/> 96 - 100% |
3. How important are writing skills in your present job? (Check one)
- ☐ Minimal importance
☐ Some importance
☐ Very important
☐ Critical importance

4. Should a separate writing course be included in the AFIT curricula?
(Check one)

☐ No
☐ Yes, as an elective
☐ Yes, as a requirement

5. Based on the needs of your current job, what topics should be emphasized in an AFIT briefing course?

<u>Strong Emphasis</u>	<u>Light Emphasis</u>	<u>No Emphasis</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grammar and syntax
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mechanics (punctuation, abbreviations, capitalization, use of numbers, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Analysis of audience and purpose
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Finding published material
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organizing material
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drafting and editing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Electronic word processing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	AF communication formats
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use of illustrations
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Citation and documentation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Style
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

6. Which of the following types of technical writing do you produce on the job, either as parts of larger documents or as separate documents?

<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical definitions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descriptions of physical objects or mechanisms
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descriptions of processes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Instructions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Abstracts or summaries
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposals
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress reports
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trip reports
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Journal articles
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Formal research reports
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Status/Trouble reports
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Letters
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff studies
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

Any comments about the role or content of briefing and writing courses in AFIT curricula will be appreciated.

☐ Yes ☐ No You may use my comments in the report.

☐ Yes ☐ No You may use my name in the report. _____
(Signature)

Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope to Dr. Charles R. Fenno, AFIT/LSH, WPAFB, OH 45433.

If you would like a copy of the completed report, sign below and verify mailing address, or contact Dr. Fenno, AFIT/LSH (AUTOVON 785-6761).

AUSCN 83-08

RESULTS

Nine of the 1,008 questionnaires mailed were returned as undeliverable because of the addressee's separation from the service. Of the remaining 999 officers who could have received survey packets, 805 recipients returned them. Four of the returned questionnaires were not filled in, leaving a total of 801 questionnaires as the data base for analysis. Therefore, the usable return was 80.1% of the potential return.

Responses to the survey questions are presented in the following paragraphs. Since every officer did not answer every question, missing responses are also reported. Where percentages are shown, they indicate adjusted frequency (that is, frequency of the response in relation to all other responses to the question).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Since the questionnaire asked respondents to answer all questions in terms of their current jobs, the first five questions collected information about the respondents and the jobs they were holding.

Ranks of the Respondents

Although it is not unusual for an AFIT graduating class to contain second lieutenants and lieutenant colonels, the very large majority of students entering each year's class hold the ranks of captain or first lieutenant.

As the following table indicates, the graduates who responded to the survey held, on the average, higher ranks than they had

held as students, a normal result of their career progression since graduation. Ninety percent of the respondents were in the ranks of lieutenant colonel, major, or captain.

<u>RANK</u>	<u>RES.</u>	<u>%RES.</u>
Major General	- 2	00.3%
Colonel	- 60	07.5%
Lieutenant Colonel	- 190	23.8%
Major	- 276	34.5%
Captain	- 253	31.7%
1st Lieutenant	- 18	02.3%
No response	- 2	****
TOTAL	801	100%

Levels of Command

The following table displays the command levels of the respondents' assignments.

<u>LEVEL</u>	<u>RES.</u>	<u>%RES.</u>
Squadron or below	- 145	18.3%
Group	- 20	02.5%
Wing	- 67	08.4%
Air Division	- 14	01.8%
Numbered Air Force	- 59	07.4%
Major Command	- 167	21.0%
Headquarters Air Force	- 68	08.6%
AFSC Product Division	- 70	08.8%
Other	- 184	23.2%
No response	- 7	****
TOTAL	801	100%

The "Other" category includes responses such as Intermediate Headquarters, Base, Defense Communication Agency, Air Logistics Center, and student status.

Years in Service

These responses report total service time, including any

noncommissioned time in a respondent's career. Totals are rounded to the nearest whole year.

Least years	-	1
Most years	-	31
No response	-	6
MODE	-	16 years

Eleven percent of the officers reported the mode of 16 years, and 34.4 percent of the officers had between 14 and 17 years of service.

Year of AFIT Graduation

Earliest	-	1963
Latest	-	1982
MODE	-	1982

Ten percent of the respondents had graduated in 1982, and 43.1 percent had graduated between 1978 and 1982, inclusive.

Duty Air Force Specialty Code

As the following table shows, the respondents were serving in a wide variety of duties when they completed the questionnaire.

<u>AFSC</u>	<u>DUTY TYPE</u>	<u>RES.</u>	<u>% RES.</u>
00XX	Commander or Director	69	08.9%
09XX	Special Duties	20	02.6%
10XX		18	02.3%
11XX		4	00.5%
12XX	Operations	5	00.6%
13XX	(Pilots and Navigators)	12	01.6%
14XX		22	02.9%
15XX		15	01.9%

[TABLE CONTINUES]

<u>AFSC</u>	<u>DUTY TYPE</u>	<u>[TABLE CONTINUED]</u>	
		<u>RES.</u>	<u>% RES.</u>
17XX	Operations (Air Weapons And Space Systems)	2	00.3%
18XX		2	00.3%
22XX	Operations (Navigator)	14	01.8%
26XX	Scientific and Development Engineering	3	00.4%
27XX		36	04.7%
28XX		17	02.2%
29XX	Program Management	5	00.6%
30XX	Communications-Electronics	56	07.3%
31XX	Aircraft and Missile Maintenance	42	05.4%
40XX		91	11.8%
51XX	Computer Systems	11	01.4%
55XX	Civil Engineering	68	08.8%
60XX	Transportation	11	01.4%
62XX	Services	3	00.4%
64XX	Supply Management	56	07.3%
65XX	Acquisition and Contracting/ Manufacturing	70	08.7%
66XX	Logistics Plans and Programs	97	12.6%
67XX	Comptroller	12	01.6%
70XX	Personnel Resource Management	1	00.1%
73XX		1	00.1%
74XX		1	00.1%
80XX	Intelligence	1	00.1%
81XX	Security Police	1	00.1%
90XX	Health Services	5	00.6%
	No response	<u>30</u>	<u>****</u>
	TOTAL	801	100%

ABOUT BRIEFING

Six questions in the survey requested information about the amounts and types of briefing required in the officers' jobs.

Percentage of Workweek Spent PREPARING Briefings

As the following table illustrates, 503 (62.8%) of the 801 respondents spent from one to ten percent of their time preparing briefings. Another 189 (23.6%) spent from eleven to twenty percent of their time preparing briefings.

<u>% TIME</u>	<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>% RESPONSES</u>
01-05%	291	36.3%
06-10%	212	26.5%
11-15%	94	11.7%
16-20%	95	11.9%
21-25%	57	07.1%
26-30%	20	02.5%
31-35%	9	01.1%
36-40%	11	01.4%
41-45%	2	00.2%
46-50%	5	00.6%
51-55%	0	00.0%
56-60%	2	00.2%
61-65%	1	00.1%
66-70%	1	00.1%
71-75%	0	00.0%
76-80%	0	00.0%
81-85%	1	00.1%
TOTAL	801	100%

MODE: 01-05%

Percentage of Workweek Spent DELIVERING Briefings

In contrast to the 503 respondents who spent one to ten percent of their workdays preparing briefings, 677 officers (84.8%) reported spending one to ten percent of their daily ti delivering briefings.

<u>% TIME</u>	<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>% RESPONSES</u>
01-05%	491	61.4%
06-10%	187	23.4%
11-15%	39	04.9%
16-20%	41	05.1%
21-25%	23	02.9%
26-30%	7	00.9%
31-35%	0	00.0%
36-40%	4	00.5%
41-45%	3	00.4%
46-50%	3	00.4%
51-55%	1	00.1%
56-60%	0	00.1%
61-65%	0	00.0%
66-70%	1	00.1%
No response	<u>1</u>	<u>*****</u>
TOTAL	801	100%

MODE: 01-05%

Percentage of Workweek Spent ATTENDING Briefings

The majority of respondents (481 or 60.3 percent) reported that they spent between one and fifteen percent of each working day attending briefings. The following table illustrates the distribution of their responses.

<u>% TIME</u>	<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>% RESPONSES</u>
01-05%	185	23.2%
06-10%	177	22.2%
11-15%	119	14.9%
16-20%	111	13.9%
21-25%	89	11.1%
26-30%	38	04.8%
31-35%	25	03.1%
36-40%	23	02.9%
41-45%	2	00.3%
46-50%	12	01.5%
51-55%	2	00.3%
56-60%	5	00.6%
61-65%	1	00.1%
66-70%	2	00.2%
71-75%	2	00.3%
76-80%	3	00.4%

[TABLE CONTINUES]

<u>% TIME</u>	<u>RESPONSES</u>	[TABLE CONTINUED] <u>% RESPONSES</u>
81-85%	2	00.3%
86-90%	1	00.1%
No response	<u>2</u>	<u>*****</u>
TOTAL	801	100%

MODE: 01-05%

Audience Size

The respondents were asked the average size of the audiences who attended their briefings. Although the mode is ten, audience sizes of fifteen and twenty were also reported by more than ten percent of the respondents.

Smallest	-	1
Largest	-	300
No response	-	33

MODE: 10 people

Several respondents cautioned against any assumption that briefings to larger audiences were more important than briefings to smaller audiences. They suggested that some of their most important briefings were delivered to small audiences. Three respondents commented that every briefing is important.

Importance of Briefing in Your Current Job

The questionnaire asked the officers to rate the importance of briefing in their current jobs by selecting one of the four responses shown in the following table. Of the 799 who answered the question, 508 (63.6%) rated briefing as very or critically important.

	<u>RES.</u>	<u>%RES.</u>
Minimal importance	- 66	08.3%
Some importance	- 225	28.2%
Very important	- 349	43.7%
Critical importance	- 159	19.9%
No response	- 2	*****
TOTAL	801	100%

MODE: "Very important"

Based on the Needs of Your Current Job, What Topics Should be Emphasized in a Briefing Course?

Respondents were asked to indicate the relative emphasis that each of six areas should receive in a briefing course in terms of their current jobs. Organizing and delivering material received the strongest recommendations. Locating material was identified as the least needed topic.

<u>STRONG EMPH.</u>	<u>LIGHT EMPH.</u>	<u>NO EMPH.</u>	<u>NO RES.</u>	
137	470	141	53	Locating material
645	98	22	36	Organizing material
614	133	19	35	Delivering material
227	451	81	42	Producing visual aids
362	340	54	45	Analyzing audiences
423	297	44	37	Handling questions/ discussions

In addition, the respondents added several topics to this list. Their nominations are included in the open-ended comments at the end of the report.

ABOUT WRITING

The next five questions requested information about the writing requirements of the respondents' jobs.

Percentage of Workweek Spent Writing:

The table shows the percentage of writing time reported by the respondents. More than one-fourth (232 or 29.1%) indicated they spent between 16 and 25 percent of each workweek writing.

<u>% TIME</u>	<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>% RESPONSES</u>
01-05%	19	02.4%
06-10%	86	10.7%
11-15%	65	08.1%
16-20%	121	15.2%
21-25%	111	13.9%
26-30%	74	09.3%
31-35%	46	05.8%
36-40%	83	10.4%
41-45%	22	02.8%
46-50%	66	08.3%
50-55%	15	01.9%
56-60%	30	03.8%
61-65%	12	01.5%
66-70%	7	00.9%
71-75%	20	02.5%
76-80%	13	01.6%
81-85%	3	00.4%
86-90%	4	00.5%
91-95%	0	00.0%
96-100%	1	00.1%
No response	3	****
TOTAL	801	100%

MODE: 16-20%

Percentage of Workweek Spent Dealing with Writing Done by Others

More than one-fourth (233 or 29.3%) of the respondents reported that they spent between 16 and 25 percent of their workweek dealing with writing done by others.

<u>% TIME</u>	<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>% RESPONSES</u>
01-05%	31	03.9%
06-10%	53	06.6%
11-15%	66	08.3%

[TABLE CONTINUES]

[TABLE CONTINUED]		
<u>% TIME</u>	<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>% RESPONSES</u>
16-20%	105	13.2%
21-25%	128	16.1%
26-30%	84	10.5%
31-35%	58	07.3%
36-40%	86	10.8%
41-45%	20	02.5%
46-50%	63	07.9%
51-55%	12	01.5%
56-60%	22	02.7%
61-65%	8	01.0%
66-70%	8	01.0%
71-75%	13	01.6%
76-80%	24	03.0%
81-85%	6	00.8%
86-90%	4	00.5%
91-95%	2	00.3%
96-100%	4	00.5%
No response	<u>4</u>	<u>*****</u>
TOTAL	801	100%
MODE: 21-25%		

Importance of Writing in Your Current Job

As the following table indicates, more than ninety percent (743 or 92.9%) of the respondents considered writing either very or critically important in their current jobs.

	<u>RES.</u>	<u>%RES.</u>
Minimal importance	- 12	01.5%
Some importance	- 43	05.4%
Very important	- 358	44.7%
Critical importance	- 385	48.2%
No response	- <u>3</u>	<u>*****</u>
TOTAL	801	100%

MODE: "Critical importance"

Based on the Needs of Your Current Job, What Topics Should be Emphasized in a Writing Course?

Respondents were asked to indicate the relative emphasis that

each of eleven areas should receive in a writing course in terms of their current jobs. Organizing material, drafting and editing, and analysis of audience and purpose received the strongest recommendations. Citation and documentation, use of illustrations, and electronic word processing were the least often recommended areas to include in a course.

<u>STRONG EMPH.</u>	<u>LIGHT EMPH.</u>	<u>NO EMPH.</u>	<u>NO RESP.</u>	
408	319	40	34	Grammar and syntax
325	389	50	37	Mechanics
437	278	47	39	Analysis of audience and purpose
113	481	162	45	Finding published information
636	119	18	28	Organizing material
480	254	32	35	Drafting and editing
116	432	209	44	Electronic word processing
241	388	130	42	Air Force communication formats
64	479	214	44	Use of illustrations
85	451	221	44	Citation <u>and</u> documentation
266	392	83	60	Style

Among the additional items added to the list, specific Air Force communication forms were named most frequently. These included background papers, talking papers, Officer Effectiveness Reports (OERs), Airman Performance Reports (APRs), inspection reports, minutes, plans, memos for record, contracts, and statements of work.

Types of Documents Produced on the Job

This question asked respondents to indicate relatively how often they produced specific types of documents in their current jobs. Letters and instructions were written often by the majority

of respondents. Formal research reports and journal articles were never written by a very large majority.

<u>OFTEN</u>	<u>SOME</u>	<u>NEVER</u>	<u>NO RES.</u>	
84	40	28	32	Technical definitions
81	306	378	36	Descriptions of physical objects or mechanisms
312	335	132	22	Descriptions of processes
427	291	63	20	Instructions
233	363	166	39	Abstracts and summaries
237	359	180	25	Proposals
342	360	78	21	Progress reports
241	415	133	12	Trip reports
21	225	516	39	Journal articles
43	172	550	36	Formal research reports
340	355	85	21	Status/trouble reports
625	147	21	8	Letters
212	426	134	29	Staff studies

Respondents indicated that they wrote a number of other types of documents. Their lists include the same topics nominated for the writing course in the previous question.

INSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS

Three questions on the survey collected data specifically of interest to curriculum planners at AFIT's School of Systems and Logistics. That information is reported below.

Did You Take a Separate Briefing Course at AFIT?

For the past several years, a course in professional briefing has been offered once each year as an elective in the School of Systems and Logistics. If a student's curriculum permits an elective in the quarter when the briefing course is offered (and not all curricula do), the student may enroll for the course upon approval of the academic advisor. More than one-fourth of the respondents reported that they took the course.

	<u>RES.</u>	<u>%RES.</u>
Yes	- 208	26.2%
No	- 586	73.2%
No response	- <u>7</u>	<u>00.9%</u>
TOTAL	801	100%

Should AFIT Offer a Separate BRIEFING Course?

Each course in the school's heavy curriculum must justify its presence not only in relation to the school's mission but also in relation to other courses that are also needed by the students in order to be effective managers and officers. Whereas other questions in the survey were intended get the respondents' ideas about the general importance of briefing in their jobs, this question sought their views on the importance of briefing as a course subject in relation to other courses in AFIT's curriculum.

	<u>RES.</u>	<u>%RES.</u>
No	- 156	19.6%
Yes, as an elective	- 394	49.5%
Yes, as a requirement	- 246	30.9%
No response	- <u>5</u>	<u>00.6%</u>
TOTAL	801	100%

Among those who responded "no," several stated that briefings are already covered in Professional Military Education (PME) courses. Others suggested that AFIT should integrate briefing experience into all of its courses rather than offering a separate course (although 80% indicated that AFIT should offer a separate course on some basis). Ten respondents recommended that the course be offered on a pass/fail basis. Seven respondents doubted that any course would help individuals who had reached

adulthood with deficient skills in oral communication.

Should AFIT Offer a Separate WRITING Course?

This question sought to determine how the respondents felt about the importance of a separate writing course in a full curriculum.

	<u>RES.</u>	<u>%RES.</u>
No	- 108	13.5%
Yes, as an elective	- 304	38.1%
Yes, as a requirement	- 385	48.3%
No response	- 4	****
TOTAL	801	100%

As was true on the topic of briefing, several respondents recommended against including a separate writing course on the grounds that PME courses were available. Sixteen recommended a communications course that would combine writing and briefing.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Many respondents added open-ended comments to the survey form and granted permission for their comments to be quoted and attributed. Representative comments are printed at the end of this report.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One point comes across emphatically in the responses of the Air Force officers who took part in this study. Communication skills--both oral and written--are essential to most of them in the performance of their jobs: 93.1 percent consider writing to be either very or critically important, and 63.6 percent place briefing skills in these same categories. Between these two areas, writing is perceived to be more important than briefing in the jobs of most of the respondents: 48.2 percent judge writing to be critically important, while 19.9 percent find briefing to be critical.

Not surprisingly, as the officers advance in rank and responsibility, they consider communication skills to be increasingly important. When the responses of the lieutenant colonels, colonels, and general officers are analyzed as a subset of the population (252 officers), 62.2 percent judge writing to be critical, while 28.8 percent judge briefing to be critical.

The respondents do more writing than briefing on the job. More officers reported spending from one to ten percent of their time preparing and delivering briefings than reported any other percentage. In contrast, more reported spending 16-20 percent of their time writing and an equivalent amount of time dealing with the writing of others than reported any other percentage.

A large majority of the respondents believe that AFIT should include briefing and writing courses in its curricula (80.4% and

86.4% respectively). In the opinion of 30.9 percent, the briefing course should be a requirement, while 49.5 percent would make it an elective. In contrast, 48.3 percent would make the writing course a requirement, and 38.1 percent would make it an elective. This pattern of considering writing more important than briefing on the job parallels the relative amounts of time that the respondents spend weekly in these two activities.

Among those who would not offer separate courses in either area, the most frequent reason was the fact that briefing and writing are covered in Professional Military Education courses. Others commented that the writing requirements of a graduate program are necessarily different from the requirements of much on-the-job writing. Four respondents suggested that AFIT should admit only applicants that could demonstrate strong communication skills. A tone of pessimism was also present in some of the comments--seven respondents doubted that any course could improve the communication of adults who were deficient in basic skills. Although several other respondents deplored the fact that adults could proceed through the undergraduate education system with deficient communication skills, they nonetheless felt that "too little too late" was better than none at all, and therefore recommended the courses be offered.

One interesting fact that is evident in the open-ended responses is that some respondents are viewing communication courses at the graduate level as remedial rather than developmental. Numerous recommendations for more basic grammar reflect

this point of view. Other respondents take a different point of view. They see communication as a skill that is honed by constant practice, and they recommend courses that emphasize adaptability in communication--courses that can enhance an officer's ability to communicate effectively in a variety of situations. Their view is that communication courses are developmental rather than remedial. From this perspective, graduate-level communication courses would be of benefit to all officers, not just to those with deficient basic skills.

Concerning the general goals of all briefing and writing courses, many respondents emphasize the need to produce clear and concise communication, often on short notice. They also point out that much of their communication requires persuading rather than merely informing their audiences. Several officers wrote of having to market their ideas, and others mention the need to obtain coordination or approval at the highest levels through well-organized and carefully supported presentations. In briefings, the respondents describe vigorous and sometimes hostile questioning; and in writing, they mention documents that are not approved because of weak organization or inadequate supporting evidence. Over and over, their recommendations on the survey are that communicators should keep their briefings and documents short and to the point, and should be prepared to defend their communications with evidence.

The officers' recommendations for the content to be emphasized in briefing and writing courses are generally in line with

these goals. Organizing material is judged to be most important in briefing and writing, followed (in briefing) by delivering material (614 responses) and handling questions and discussions (423 responses). In writing, organizing material is followed by drafting and editing, and analysis of audience and purpose.

In contrast, the officers would place least emphasis on locating material and producing visual aids in briefing courses, and on citation and documentation, use of illustrations, and electronic word processing in writing courses. Although the lack of emphasis on citation and documentation in writing courses might seem to contradict the open-ended comments about being prepared to support communications with evidence, it is more likely that the respondents are suggesting that, while documentation is important, a course should not dwell on specific documentation or citation formats, which vary considerably among publication media.

It is also interesting to note that while 50.1 percent of the respondents recommend strong emphasis on grammar and mechanics in a writing course, these topics ranked behind organizing material, drafting and editing, and analysis of audience and purpose in order of recommended emphasis. This ranking again suggests that the respondents view the optimum course as developmental rather than merely remedial.

The survey results indicate that the types of writing done by the respondents on the job vary considerably, although most respondents write letters, the most frequently mentioned format.

Other frequently written formats are instructions (53.3%), progress reports (42.6 percent), status/trouble reports (42.4%), and descriptions of processes (38.9%). Most respondents had little or no occasion to write formal research reports, journal articles, or descriptions of physical objects or mechanisms.

Although some types of writing, such as letters, are common to every job, the respondents also noted that different jobs may require different types of writing. They address this variability specifically when they state that recent changes of assignment or of supervisors have affected the types, quantities, and styles of writing they are expected to produce.

This variation by assignments may explain why only 31 percent of the respondents believe that an AFIT writing course should emphasize specific Air Force document forms. The majority seem to agree with one officer's statement that writers must adapt to local conventions, and that format conventions can be learned only on the job. This view is also consistent with the officers' emphasis on adaptability in communication situations.

In summary, the results of this study underscore the importance of effective communication as the Air Force carries out its mission. Major General Graham W. Rider stated the position clearly: "No amount of education can be said to have value unless it is used. Education is used to produce results which must be communicated. Unless an educated officer can communicate, the results of his or her work will have no value to the Air Force." The responses clearly support this assessment.

COMMENTS BY THE RESPONDENTS

The following pages contain a selection of the open-ended comments that respondents added to their questionnaires. They have been selected for quotation because they meet either of two criteria: (1) they contain the writer's ideas about the role of effective communication in carrying out the Air Force's mission, or (2) they suggest specific problems, topics, or methodologies that should be considered in courses intended to develop effective communication skills.

The authors included in this section granted permission to quote and attribute their statements.

No amount of education can be said to have value unless it is used. Education is used to produce results which must be communicated. Unless an educated officer can communicate, the results of his or her work will have no value to the Air Force.

Maj Gen Graham W. Rider, USAF

[The] biggest difficulty of young officers in writing is lack of proper grammar and lack of briefness. [Problems in speeches include]

- sentences too long
- not conversational
- too technical for audience
- poor transitions
- prepared to be read
- too long
- poor introduction and summary
- not persuasive
- not entertaining.

Maj Gen Gerald L. Prather, USAF

Speaking and writing capabilities become extremely important as officers progress through their Air Force careers. Becoming an organized thinker is the key to passing one's thoughts on to others. The communication process becomes critical as an individual transitions from action officer to manager positions. Getting results through the actions of others is difficult enough without communication problems.

Lt Col Ronald D. Hoover, USAF

In higher echelon staff positions there is a definite need to treat both written and orally presented material in hierarchical fashion, depending on the "audience." For example, on the Air Staff level, one is faced with a communication task structure as illustrated below:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Division Level | -Detailed analysis of a problem area.
Written report and briefing. |
| Directorate Level | -Detailed written report and briefing with
background, technical details of analysis,
conclusions, alternatives, and
recommendations. |

DCS Level

-Summary of analysis with conclusions, alternatives, and directorate recommendations.

Chief of Staff Level

-Executive summary with DCS recommendations.

Col William A. Smiley, USAF

I found the speech course and the English review provided at the Graduate Logistics Management Program invaluable over time since graduation. They also made the speaking and writing requirements of the program much easier and more meaningful.

Col John H. White, Jr., USAF

As Executive Officer to a MAJCOM Commander, I see more briefings and write and review more correspondence than most of my counterparts. Communication is the key to decision-making. Most important decisions are made by higher level officers receiving the communication (briefing or correspondence). If you, as the communicator, don't get the "right" message across, you can't expect the "right" decision. In my opinion, the greatest communication problems are the tendencies toward form over substance and the inability (for lack of communicative skills) of an otherwise knowledgeable person to get his point across. I would have benefitted from AFIT speech and writing courses. They should be included in the AFIT curricula.

Lt Col William K. Deen, USAF

A large part of my editing for people who write for me is devoted to cutting down excess wordage. The young lieutenant or captain needs to understand that colonels or generals are interested only in the very meat of their letter or report. They have a tendency to try to provide too much detail. Their project is to them the only important aspect of their job, but to the commander it may only be 5-10% of his first hour. Emphasis is needed on the audience for which the individual is writing.

Col Jimmy D. Carver, USAF

The role and importance of communications cannot be overemphasized. However, [I] question the need for "mechanics" at the AFIT level. It would seem that the most important element would

relate to emphasis on the "receivers," to include level of understanding of the topics/subjects to be presented. We often lose sight of the intended audience and, as such, fail to communicate. Stay with this important area and leave "mechanics" to SOS, Effective Writing Courses, etc.

Col Robert F. Swarts, USAF

Although I do not give many briefings, I must make sure that any briefings given to the Command Section are perfect. The same applies to correspondence. Needless to say, I consider speech and writing courses extremely important, and what I received at AFIT critical to my success in the Air Force.

Col P. A. Dillman, USAF

Briefing and writing are the way we do business. If we cannot communicate, we will not succeed.

Col Robert B. Crist, USAF

I spend a great deal of time proofreading and correcting correspondence prepared for my signature by subordinates. I don't feel that I should have to do this; however, it is necessary to ensure the quality and correctness of correspondence leaving the organization. I attribute the situation to a general failure of our educational system to teach basic English, particularly grammar and composition skills. And, it seems to be getting worse.

If there were but one service that AFIT could perform for its students, I would strongly recommend that it be instruction in correct grammar (sentence structure, punctuation, paragraphing, organizing, etc.). I'm not being facetious when I say that we are getting officers today that don't know that a singular subject takes a singular verb.

Lt Col Stephen Huff, USAF

In looking back at what I took away from [the] Grad[uate] Log[istics Program] in 1968, the course that benefitted me the most was "Practical Speaking for the Technical Man." The quantitative skills have atrophied over time because I have op[erations] research analysts who perform that function. However, when it comes time to make/present positions for critical decision making, communication skills become all important. I do an extensive

amount of briefing to high level Air Force, DOD, and OMB officials. I would suggest a combination speaking/briefing course. In my opinion, the main ingredient is to know your subject, then organize it clearly and make an effective delivery. I don't think grad loggers need to be drilled in gathering data or producing visual aids. That smacks of the ABCs of a schoolhouse solution, not real world.

Col William P. Hallin, USAF

The single most important skill of the staff officer or organization commander is writing and briefing. I use "single skill" because I consider writing and speaking as one. If you cannot write and speak effectively, your work tasks are considerably more difficult.

Lt Col Philip H. Ferro, USAF

Pick subjects that are controversial or contentious--real world stuff. Make the students face uncertainty and try to answer the tough questions.

Make the students try to counter a tough advocate for a certain policy or whatever. These spirited sessions (with civility, of course) are important in preparing our young officers--and it builds character, so they say!

Col Robert Stanovich, USAF

It is mandatory for an officer to be able to communicate persuasively, logically, effectively, and succinctly in his career. He or she must learn and develop briefing skills not only to communicate but, as they rise in rank and position, to be able to guide others in how to prepare briefings and written correspondence.

Although I have used something from every course taken at AFIT, by far the most important course I had was in briefing, as I use it every day. You may be a brilliant logistician, but if you cannot express yourself well, you won't win!

Col R. B. Grabler, USAF

In my two years as an ROTC instructor, I've been truly appalled by the lack of preparation college students receive in basic communication skills. They don't understand what they need, a complete sentence seems to be beyond their capabilities, and the use of the vernacular cannot be erased from their speech patterns. Even worse, those within the Air Force tasked with providing instruction are by no means free of these same traits. I realize that we cannot hope to replace the nation's public school system with one, necessarily broad, post-graduate course, but SOMETHING IS BETTER THAN NOTHING. I strongly urge implementation of at least one course.

Capt James Vitelli, USAF

I indicated that I did not agree with having a briefing course in the AFIT curricula. In my seventeen years, briefing skills have helped me some, but the key has been my ability to speak and write properly regardless of the situation. Too often the word "briefing" relates to a specific type of environment in the Air Force. I have seen officers who survive the briefing environment but could not communicate in other situations. We need officers who can think on their feet and communicate properly. Therefore, I would support a speech course to be added to the AFIT program for those who could not demonstrate a proficiency in public speaking.

Writing skills are critical. I have had to write too many documents, letters, reports, OERs, and so on, for officers senior to me because they could not write. Also, I have had to correct too many ill-written pieces for my subordinates and peers. Air Force officers must be able to write.

AFIT is more than an Air Force graduate school. It is a symbol of academic excellence. AFIT graduates should be able to speak and write properly.

Maj William E. Smith, USAF

I recommend your speech instruction emphasize the locating and analyzing of information rather than its delivery with audio visuals, etc. Let me explain. Although my present duty, AFROTC instructor, very definitely requires me to be able to speak well and make colorful presentations, this is not a typical AFIT graduate's job: it's a special duty assignment that only a few AFIT grads may be assigned to. Furthermore, Air University's Academic Instructor School has adequately prepared me for the speaking requirements of this job. However, my previous assignment was a typical logistics job; it required me to prepare and present a briefing each day to a general officer and his staff.

Half my work day was dedicated to collecting logistics information, synthesizing it, analyzing it, reducing it to understandable terms, and writing a presentable script to describe it. At the same time, I had to be prepared with details and background information so I could field questions which begat questions which begat questions.

In that job, I discovered presenting successful briefings required more than just having your "ducks in a row." It required (1) knowing where to find the information you need (locating your ducks to place in a row); (2) being able to discern what information is both relevant and important (being able to tell a duck from a red herring); and (3) being able to answer two or three levels of questions beyond the information presented (knowing what kind of ducks they are, whether there are more flying around out there like them, and how they can be attracted). Audio visuals for these briefings were no problem for me; they were prepared by experts at the AV shop. Briefings were as brief and conversational as possible. There were no fancy scripts, no catchy intros, developed bodies, and point-selling conclusions.

Now the point I'm making is this: audio visuals and fancy footwork are great, but I've seen fellow briefers (and teachers) shot down along with their ducks by relying on these alone. Although it's important to be articulate, it's more important to know what you're talking about, and even more important again to have all the information available for the hearer to be able to manage, lead, decide, or whatever. The area of instruction I think you at AFIT can help your grads in, is how to locate and organize information. Include practical exercises which place students' knowledge under pressures of discerning questions by AFIT staff members. Each student should have to respond to questions that require knowledge at least two levels beyond the information presented. I suggest you integrate this into the thesis part of the program, beginning with defending their proposals. I'm not minimizing the importance of style or delivery, but leave that to PME. Research and analysis are in AFIT's bailiwick. That is what AFIT should concentrate on.

Maj Philip A Covell, USAF

I am glad to see this survey. Speaking and writing are certainly major aspects of a manager's job. Effective communication is not usually easy, and we may not always wish to air our ignorance, so that communication presents a challenge. In the ever increasing complexity of our age, it is a wonder that we communicate as well as we do--or do we? Without a new approach to dealing with complexity, I wonder if things are not going to get quite confused.

I think as managers (ordinary course for managers) we must:

- know what we know and what we don't know
- know where our responsibilities end
- be able to convey that we are handling a problem even though as a manager we should not be expected to have in-depth technical knowledge, despite questioners with this philosophy
- be prepared to deal with hostile reactions
- get feedback on how we come across--effectiveness
- shift gears during a briefing if the scenario is not what we thought it would be (and recognize such a situation) [and] communicate truth always, though with prudence.

I hope this helps your survey be successful.

Capt Robert L. Doerr, USAF

[We need] more emphasis on effective writing--need many more short written assignments, maybe evaluated but not graded. [We] need more practice in letter writing and informal writing. AFIT graduate school may not seem like the place, but what better "captive audience" situation do Air Force officers have to polish or, probably more correctly, learn writing skills?

Although the Squadron Officer School (SOS) writing program is pretty mechanical and also too limited, it does have a basic, simple, effective philosophy. [It] may be worthwhile to get some crosstalk [and] feedback from SOS.

Formal briefings in my job are rare, but informal briefings (short notice, often extemporaneous) happen every day. Organization and clear delivery are much more important than content, which is pretty cut-and-dried.

Bottom line: I think writing and speaking skills are much more valuable and useful than knowledge of microeconomics, systems management, production control, and lots of other AFIT courses.

Capt Robbin R. Schellhous, USAF

Speaking and writing are fundamental to one's successful progression in the Air Force. There is nothing more critical than having to make major editorial changes to "final" documents. As frustrating as a speech and writing course can be to a student, my experience suggests that the articulate speaker and writer will tend to win their arguments more often than not.

Lt Col Dave Barker, USAF

Successful speech and writing are essential to effective Air Force leadership. Many judgements are formed by subordinates on how well their superior speaks or writes. Poor communication results in subordinates questioning their superior's capability on the job and may affect the way subordinates react to their superior's orders.

Although many officers would not choose a speech or writing course if it were offered as an elective, I believe most would feel they would benefit by taking such courses. For this reason, the course should be made mandatory.

Capt Larry L. Lawrence, USAF

Speaking, writing, listening, and analyzing and reducing technical data are the most important aspects of this job. Most often a Headquarters Project Officer is one deep and is looked upon as the expert in his area. There is nothing more frustrating than having a person on the staff who cannot communicate effectively and efficiently. There are a lot of deadlines and not enough time to do everything. When a person can't produce an acceptable document the first time, he creates problems for many other people by causing them to expend more effort to reaccomplish the document.

The more ways that AFIT can require students to produce written material, the better for everyone. Each course should require a report or paper of some sort. Emphasize summaries and reduction of raw data to salient points.

Major Joseph V. Link, USAF

I see speaking as a subcategory of writing. Writing can never receive too much emphasis. A course should address planning, organizing, the first cut, editing, grammar, and clarity.

Major Gary E. Lorenz, USAF

A course in writing is absolutely paramount. I supervise five officers and none of them can write. They cannot place themselves in the shoes of the reader and never do any previous organization of thoughts. Admittedly, none of them are AFIT graduates, but they do represent a good cross-section of college graduates who have concentrated far too long on the technical aspects of a job. I spend nearly 30% of my office time rewriting, editing, correcting--and I'm not picky about style or words; I only want the questions answered or problems addressed. Organization and not considering the reader's level of understanding are primary faults.

The same comments to a lesser degree apply to briefings. [They are] not as critical because the person being briefed can usually ask questions on hazy points.

Lt Col Robert E. Bryan, USAF

[I] request that any effort in communications study emphasize "communications in the real world." It is my experience that such formal study is MOST concerned with some "school solution." The school solution may be most helpful with grammar or certain formats; however, most real world communications are back of the envelope letters or cut and paste briefings.

This IS an important topic. Any such course work must prepare one for the real world.

Major John R. Phillip, USAF

Communication skills and proficiency are of critical importance to an officer's effective performance of his duties. Within program management, an individual must frequently "sell" his ideas, proposals, recommendations, and so on by briefing or writing. I'm amazed at the number of captains and majors who do not possess even the minimal communication skills. Anything that AFIT can do to stress the importance and especially improve the skills will be of benefit to the individual and the Air Force. The best ideas or proposals lose credibility if not presented effectively.

Yes, officers and graduate students should already possess communication skills; yes, PME is supposed to teach it; but the reality is that it is not working that way. If the AFIT curriculum is tight, I'd recommend eliminating a technical subject. Application of technical skills may be limited. Application of communication skills is required across the board. A communication course should be mandatory and for credit to emphasize its

importance to students. Communication skills should be considered just as important, if not more so, as technical skills. The value of technical knowledge is limited if it cannot be communicated.

Lt Col Richard M. Kubicko, USAF

Speaking and writing are the most important aspects of the current military officer (after leadership, of course). Speaking skills should demonstrate and instruct the methods of putting together in a logical sequence the facts of technical and fiscal issues, assuming the audience knows little of the subject matter. Then, the speakers should be able to zero in on the issues and decision points for the consideration of the decision makers or attendees of the briefing. Recommendations are not as important as the logical sequence of facts and decision points.

Writing should be trained in a similar manner. Present the ideas logically. Illustrate the decision points and key issues. The words that are chosen are extremely important in correspondence written for senior members of the DOD/USAF. Vocabulary and tone are critical. This is very difficult to impart in a classroom, but faculty members who have served on staffs at Product Divisions, MAJCOMS, and HQ USAF should have been in a position to observe this and pass along particulars as examples of the generic points I have attempted to make.

Capt Gordon L. Bendick, USAF

As a squadron commanding officer, organizing and delivering speeches, briefings, etc., is critical to the success of the commander-subordinate relationship. Formal and informal presentations to groups from the size of one to several hundred are the norm. And that is every day! You can't get enough of it. Swift, accurate, concise writing is also important, but less so than speaking.

Lt Col Arnold L. Weinman, USAF

One should be able to brief anywhere from an informal setting to a very structured, formal level. In my last three years, I've briefed groups of basic airmen and general officers at the Pentagon (and just about every level in between).

If a briefing requires visual aids, good ones will enhance it, but I've found that bad ones will kill it.

Maj William R. Davis, USAF

Communications skills are as important as technical skills to the effective performance of my duties. In fact, virtually all of my working hours are spent reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The difference between a successful contracting officer and one who is ineffective is, in my opinion, largely the ability to communicate clearly.

Given the importance I attach to communication, emphasis in sharpening these skills at AFIT is fully warranted. A basic course should be mandatory. Additional advanced courses should be offered as electives.

Maj Bobby G. Christian, USAF

The ability to effectively speak and write is essential to a professional. An inability to communicate effectively diminishes not only the quality and quantity of the individual's output, but the output of those who report to him or her.

I cannot emphasize the importance of both speech and writing. The style taught, however, should not be a stilted, structured one. It should be one with "color" and excitement. The briefer or writer can always tone down to fit the audience/reader.

AFIT has a responsibility to arm graduates with these skills.

Lt Col V. M. Karlin, USAF

The oral communication section of the questionnaire addressed only briefings. I am assigned to primarily a civilian environment in which I rarely present briefings, but I frequently am a Master of Ceremonies and make presentations to local civic leaders and businessmen dealing with DOD. I suggest you expand oral communications to include making oral presentations in the following situations: performing as a Master of Ceremonies, making awards presentations, and even the art of chairing meetings in which skill in public speaking is important.

I feel that knowledge of your audience is a key ingredient to successful public speaking. I also feel that effective presentation of humor is very helpful in putting an audience at ease and those in attendance more receptive.

I heartily concur with your effort. I never miss an opportunity to encourage students to take courses in speech and effective writing in preparation for the business world.

Maj Michael R. Daly, USAF

The content of these courses should include discussions that highlight the fact that the briefing or written report communicates something about the author as well as something about the subject matter being presented.

Maj Richard Peschke, USAF

I believe that everyone should be required to take a speech course regardless of prior experience. Those who have had a great deal of prior experience can help others just by example.

A writing test should be given to everyone. Those whose writing abilities need little improvement probably should not have to take a writing course unless they want to take one. However, those who demonstrate a lack of ability in writing skills should be required to take a writing course.

Capt Richard Volpe, USAF

Your efforts in this area are extremely important. Writing and speaking skills are critical in today's Air Force. The individuals who can communicate their ideas to others in a clear and concise manner will usually receive more recognition from superiors than individuals who have communication problems. Within the Logistics Management arena, these two skills are prerequisites for outstanding job performance.

Speech for Military Managers is an excellent course and should be made a required part of the AFIT curricula.

Capt Robert B. Gillette, USAF

[. . .] The failure to use stenos or word processing drags down the productivity of an activity. Officers should be taught to collect and organize thoughts (an outline form will do for starters) and be put through the process of actual dictation. [. . .] As an extension of dictation, we should emphasize use of word processing, recorders, computer disks for establishing recurring lists, report formats, lengthy correspondence subject to editing changes, etc.

Col Merle R. Williams, USAF

I took AFIT's graduate speech course in 1971. It was extremely helpful to critique speeches using the video tape. This was a practical and useful approach.

I have had several staff jobs since graduation. [In these, I] found that the ability to organize and condense complex issues down to two or three points into a one page (or less) staff summary, memo, or point paper was invaluable. It also took a lot of work.

In summary, briefing and writing (especially staff writing) have been invaluable in my jobs. AFIT should emphasize these areas. Senior staff make many (most?) decisions based on the briefings and writings of those working for them. The better job we do, the better the decisions--hopefully.

Maj James N. Gibson, USAF

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In response to a questionnaire sent to 1,008 Air Force officers, 801 respondents provided information about the writing and briefing requirements of their current jobs. In addition, more than 400 of the officers commented on the importance of communication skills and recommended objectives for courses designed to help leaders and managers to communicate effectively.

A very large majority (93.1%) of the respondents consider writing to be either "very" or "critically" important on the job; 63.6% put briefing in the same categories. The officers consider organizing material to be of greatest importance in both writing and briefing, followed by (in writing) drafting and editing and analysis of audience and purpose. In briefings, delivering material and handling questions and discussions are also very important to the respondents.

According to the officers, the primary objective of a professional communication course is to produce a clear and direct communication style in documents and briefings. The respondents agree that competence in basic grammar and mechanics is essential, but they do not limit their recommendations to remedial topics. They also recommended that courses develop adaptability to different communication situations, and the ability to organize and deliver information cogently on short notice.

The majority believe that briefing (80.4%) and writing (86.4%) instruction should be available to graduate students.

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